



# Creating Variation: Sentence Structure & Diction

## Diction Before You Begin Drafting

For each of the categories below, list a few words that pertain to your topic of discussion.

**Nouns:** (The *who's* and *what's* of your paper)

**Verbs:** (Specific actions)

**Adjectives:** (Words that describe *which* and *what kind* of your nouns)

**Adverbs:** (Words that tell *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*, *how much*, and *to what extent*)

By doing the activity above, before composing your first draft, you will be able to identify and establish the concrete language of your paper. Having a physical list or representation of this language, will help you find words that better express your ideas and opinions throughout your discussion.

### Additional Tips for After You've Written A Draft

- **Go through your writing and highlight, circle, or underline words that you use frequently.** Notice how often you use one particular word; this is a “crutch word.” Think of crutch words as placeholders for a stronger word that you have not yet found.
- **Use a Thesaurus (an actual hard copy is preferable).** Once you have identified your crutch words, turn to a thesaurus to help you find stronger words that better embody what you are trying to accomplish. **PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE DEFINITIONS OF WORDS YOU ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH.**
- **Ask a friend (or your friendly Writing Lab consultant) for help.** After carefully going through the first steps on your own, an extra set of eyes is an excellent way to pinpoint additional areas for improvement.

## Sentence Structure Recognizing Your Writing Habits

**Ask yourself how you tend to structure your sentences.**

<p>Having a large amount of complex, or lengthy sentences tends to overwhelm the reader and often leads to confusion.</p>	<p><i>On the other hand...</i></p>	<p>A paper largely composed of short sentences slow down the pace of the paper as well as fails to establish strong connections between ideas. <i>Just because you understand how everything connects doesn't mean your reader will.</i></p>
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\*It is important to **keep in mind the audience** that you are writing for whenever you draft an assignment. Even though you may be writing to a professor you still want to make the discussion interesting and fresh for the reader. One way to do this is to ensure that you have a variety of sentences.

**Ask yourself the following questions...**

- How many ideas do you express in one paragraph?
- How about in one sentence?
- How much time are you spending on one idea? Is it significantly more (or less) than you are spending on others?

**Here are some tips to help you out...**

- You should stick to one idea per paragraph (other than the initial and final sentence(s) of the paragraph). Such sentences should introduce and connect the idea of one paragraph to the idea of the next in order to transition from one thought to another.
- A sentence should also focus on one idea at a time. Each sentence should play off the previous sentence to propel your reader into a deeper understanding.
- If you are trying to express multiple ideas in a sentence, ask yourself the following questions in the editing process:
  - What is the focus of this sentence?
  - How does it relate to the sentences surrounding it?
  - Are there excess words that I do not need to use?